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CIA won't send radar specialists to Sinai passes

The following story is based on an interview of CIA director William E. Colby by Peter Lisagor, Washington Bureau chief of The Chicago Daily News, and bureau members William J. Eaton and Robert Gruenberg.

WASHINGTON — The Central Intelligence Agency will withhold its electronics specialists from the American detachment in the Sinai mountain passes because of the uproar over the CIA's past conduct.

CIA Director William E. Colby disclosed his agency's reluctance to be drawn into enforcement of the interim Israeli-Egyptian peace agreement during an interview.

"We looked at it and thought about it," Colby said, referring to assignment of CIA personnel as radar experts on the critical mountain roads.

"But in the present atmosphere, we didn't want to be involved. . . . It's not for the CIA to run it — unless Congress wants us to. It's the pure politics of the situation," he explained.

Colby said he would have no objection, however, if former CIA employees were selected for the lookout role to be performed by about 200 Americans in the Sinai.

"They (ex-CIA men) don't leave here with a brand on their forehead," Colby said. "They are free citizens, and we have no control over them."



William Colby

THE DECISION against CIA participation in the Sinai pact was one example of how the spy agency has been affected by the fallout from a string of disclosures in newspaper reports and congressional hearings.

But Colby said the organization was far from crippled.

"We still do some very venturesome things," Colby said. "The risk factor is up, and the impact of exposure is higher."

The CIA chief estimated that Senate and House committees would finish hearings on intelligence gathering early next year, new legislation would be approved in the spring and "then hopefully we'll all get back to work."

UNTIL then, however, Colby stands embattled in his secluded, granite command post, fighting public relations battles and letting his deputies do most of the CIA's daily work.

"We're going to have to climb back out of the trough

here," Colby said. "I'm trying to get over the sensationalism of the particular into the excellence of the general — and that's hard."

Yet, seated in his plant-filled office overlooking the green hills of Langley, Va., Colby said the impact of the disclosures on many phases of the CIA's work was less than many people might expect.

"The short-term effect on our intelligence product has been surprisingly not all that (much)," he reported. "We're still getting good information, good reports. Much of this is technical, of course."

"We have lost people — agents — who say, 'I can't work for you anymore' — and this has had a depressing effect. But we've gotten new ones. . . the best motivation (for foreign agents) is ideological. . . ."

ON THE brighter side, he reported the agency had 760 job inquiries from college students last July — double the 360 letters received in July, 1974.

Colby says he wants new guidelines for the CIA, better supervision and closer oversight by Congress than the agency had in the past when it opened "mail going overseas, considered assassination plots against foreign leaders and spied on antiwar groups in the United States.

"I'm fighting to keep a few secrets," he said, with a faint smile on his tanned face. "We spent billions of dollars — and I mean billions — to collect what a Soviet attache can get for \$2 by going to a newsstand and buying a copy of Aviation Week."

AS A CIA veteran who has watched other directors get the sack after an embarrassing CIA episode, Colby is aware that he may get the ax after a decent interval.

"Are you viable?" he was asked.

"That's not up to me to answer," he replied, brushing aside the rumors in Washington that Sec. of State Henry A. Kissinger and Vice President Nelson A. Rockefeller believe Colby should be replaced.

In fact, Colby had high praise for Kissinger as a "splendid" official despite some disagreements between the two men.

"I'm expendable any time," Colby said. "If the decision comes that it might be nice to have a new face, there's a point to that."

HE POINTED over his shoulder to the written commission which says that he serves "at the pleasure of the President" and added:

"We've got to demonstrate that intelligence is important to the country. We've got the best intelligence in the world. We need new guidelines, better supervision and better protection of its secrecy."

"If we get all that out of this, it doesn't matter who runs this (agency)."